

UCLA

UCLA Journal of Environmental Law and Policy

Title

Foreword

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/24q0r02p>

Journal

UCLA Journal of Environmental Law and Policy, 27(2)

Author

Waxman, Henry A.

Publication Date

2009

DOI

10.5070/L5272019568

Copyright Information

Copyright 2009 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Foreword

*Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives*

As an alumnus of the UCLA School of Law and a Board member of the Emmett Center on Climate Change and the Environment, I am especially pleased to highlight our law school's role as a leader in legal scholarship on climate change law and policy.

The Emmett Center is dedicated to advancing law and policy solutions to the climate change crisis and training the next generation of leaders in creating these solutions. The Center's important work includes interdisciplinary study to develop policy tools for decisionmakers locally, state-wide, nationally, and beyond.

The law school also houses this Journal. This issue is a joint effort with the Emmett Center and is a forum for state policymakers to reflect on their actions on climate change and their roles in light of potential federal action.

This year — 2009 — is a year of decision on energy security and global warming. I want to outline the policy issues as I see them, and the imperative that we address them. There is a compelling need to address both energy and environmental issues, and we now have a historic opportunity to do so.

For nearly four decades, we have been too dependent on imported energy. Last year's soaring oil prices were a searing reminder of our economy's reliance on fuel sources we do not control. The American people have had enough. Thirty-five years after the first Arab oil embargo, it is time for us to act.

With respect to the environment, there is no responsible disagreement that warming is occurring. The dangers we face are real: more damage from drought that eviscerates agriculture, more storms like Katrina that devastate entire regions, more brush fires that burn through the West, and more infestations that destroy forests throughout the country.

At long last, we have a chance to tackle the extraordinarily serious problem of global warming while we strive for energy independence at the same time.

The common denominator of energy security and global warming is more efficient energy use and alternative energy sources. Energy and the environment are intrinsically linked to our economy. And the challenges we face in each area need to be solved together. A piecemeal approach will not work.

THE FIRST PROBLEM IS OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL.

The United States possesses less than 2% of the world's oil, yet consumes almost 25% of the world's annual supply. This is an unsustainable equation.

At the height of the oil price crisis last year, the United States imported approximately 1.4 million barrels of oil per day from Saudi Arabia. For much of 2008, the U.S. sent Saudi Arabia over \$140 million per day. And when you include all of the OPEC nations, the U.S. spent more than \$550 million on imported oil per day — that's more than \$200 billion per year.

A 2006 report by the Council on Foreign Relations, co-chaired by John Deutch and James Schlesinger, concluded, "Major energy consumers, notably the United States, are finding that their growing dependence on imported energy increases their strategic vulnerability and constrains their ability to pursue a broad range of foreign policy and national security objectives."

THE SECOND PROBLEM IS ENVIRONMENTAL.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is among the most authoritative bodies in the world in assessing global warming. It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize along with Al Gore for its work on climate change.

It recently warned that, "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal. . . . Continued greenhouse gas emissions at or above current rates would cause further warming and induce many changes in the global climate system during the 21st century that would *very likely* be larger than those observed during the 20th century."

THE THIRD ISSUE IS ECONOMIC, FOR BOTH
INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES.

Reduced energy use pays huge economic dividends. Every dollar we save from using more efficient cars and energy sources and importing less foreign oil is, in effect, a tax cut for the American people.

Every new technology we invent to make homes and businesses more energy efficient is a new export industry that will be the next wave of American leadership and technology around the world.

The most impressive hearing in recent months on this issue was in our Committee in January, when the US Climate Action Partnership (USCAP) testified.

USCAP includes businesses like Alcoa, BP, Chrysler, ConocoPhillips, DuPont, GE, GM, PepsiCo, Shell, and Siemens, as well as the Natural Resources Defense Council and the World Resources Institute.

They presented a blueprint to us:

USCAP believes that strong climate legislation is a critical element of any effort to stimulate investment and innovation in low-carbon technologies. The *Blueprint* provides specific guidelines for the Administration and Congress to enact legislation that both protects the environment and facilitates the necessary transition to a vibrant, low-carbon economy. That includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent of 2005 levels by 2050 through an economy-wide cap-and-trade program.

This shows that business knows global warming is real and wants certainty about the regulatory goals and costs.

I do not believe we have any choice but to act — and act decisively. In his speech to Congress and the nation in February, President Obama said:

I ask this Congress to send me legislation that places a market-based cap on carbon pollution and drives the production of more renewable energy in America. And to support that innovation, we will invest fifteen billion dollars a year to develop technologies like wind power and solar power; advanced biofuels, clean coal, and more fuel-efficient cars and trucks built right here in America.

In this issue, you will read articles by state environmental commissioners and directors from Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Wisconsin. These articles showcase the climate change policies of states and regional organizations such as the Western Climate Initiative, the

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, and the Midwestern Governors Association.

They are helping to point the way for us in Washington. They show that pragmatic, inspired, and effective policies can make a difference in the fight to prevent global warming from irrevocably degrading our planet.

I commend the articles in this edition of the Journal to you.